

AMERICAN RELIGION AND POLITICS

A Review Essay

ALLEN D. HERTZKE
University of Oklahoma

Richard John Neuhaus. *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984. Pp. 280. \$8.75, paper.

Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, eds. *The New Christian Right*. New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1983. Pp. 256. \$9.95, paper.

A. James Reichley. *Religion in American Public Life*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1985. Pp. 402. \$11.95, paper.

Peter L. Benson and Dorothy L. Williams. *Religion on Capitol Hill*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. Pp. 224. \$8.95, paper.

Robert Booth Fowler. *Religion and Politics in America*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1984. Pp. 351. \$25.00, hardback.

Kenneth D. Wald. *Religion and Politics in the United States*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987. Pp. 301. \$14.00, paper.

Paul Lopatto. *Religion and the Presidential Election*. New York: Praeger, 1985. Pp. 177. \$34.95, hardback.

It was a small but significant event. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., an ecumenical memorial service was held in St. Charles Borromeo church in Harlem. Standing outside the church a TV reporter solemnly observed: "It was a religious service, and fitting that it should be, for, after all, Dr. King was the son of a minister" (Neuhaus 1985: 97-8). To Richard John Neuhaus, confidant of King's and author of *The Naked Public Square*, this event is emblematic of the unconscious mindset of secular elites "that matters of public significance must be sanitized of religious particularity" (1985: 98). King must be made the *son* of a preacher, like Walter Mondale, one generation safely removed from the ministry, certainly not a religious man himself whose politics were deeply enmeshed with his faith. It was this secular habit of mind, Neuhaus argues, that kept reporters from understanding the profoundly religious foundations of the civil rights movement: "It regularly occurred that the klieg lights for the television cameras would be turned off during Dr. King's speeches when he dwelt on the religious and moral-philosophical basis of the movement for racial justice" (1985: 98).

If there is a single theme which weaves its way through the diverse books reviewed here it is a recognition that for too long American in-

Received: October 1, 1987

Revision Received: November 13, 1987

Accepted: November 20, 1987

tellectuals, like reporters or Washington political cognoscenti, have been largely blind to religion and its continuing role in U.S. society and politics — blind because they operated within a framework that postulated the inexorable decline of religion in the modern world. Fortunately for those of us who study religion and politics, this paradigm can no longer hold back the genuine knowledge explosion occurring in American scholarship. The waxing interest in religion and politics is reflected not only in a deluge of recent books (including several forthcoming issues in 1988), but also in the growing number of Ph.D. dissertations, conference papers, and scholarly panels devoted to the subject. Moreover, in 1986 the American Political Science Association officially designated a subfield of Religion and Politics, the membership of which now exceeds two hundred scholars.

But this is not just a story about the emergence of a subfield; rather, if the empirical and normative forays of this new scholarship are as fruitful as I believe they are, then what we are witnessing is a challenge to many of the assumptions of our discipline. Indeed, religion may be a window to dimensions of politics hitherto hidden, not just in America, but around the world. Ironically, we have those much maligned fundamentalist moral majoritarians to thank for the growing legitimacy of this new focus of inquiry. God works in strange ways.

RELIGION AND AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

At the center of this new scholarship on religion and politics is a profound awareness of American exceptionalism — the peculiar attachment of Americans to religion. Whether one considers church attendance, survey statements on religious beliefs and practices, or financial contributions to church organizations, the United States is an anomalous case among other industrialized nations. Yet despite this and a decade of political events linked to religion in America — the election of a born-again evangelical as president in 1976, the rise of the New Religious Right in 1979, the Reverend Jesse Jackson's church-based presidential bids, the Sanctuary movement, the Catholic Bishops' challenge to U.S. nuclear policy, potent religious lobbying against aid to the Nicaraguan Contras, and Pat Robertson's stunning early organizational successes in Michigan, Iowa, and South Carolina — many political scientists have been slow to accept the political salience of religion, in part because of prevailing theories of its inevitable decline. Kenneth Wald, for example, notes that two of the most forceful paradigms are the modernization approach associated with Durkheim, Weber, and Parsons and the class conflict model developed by Marx and Engels (Wald 1987: 3). Whether as a result of urbanization and the "demystification" of nature, as the former hypothesized, or by virtue of the materialist dialectic, as the latter posited, religion would increasingly become marginalized as history progressed. These theories have profoundly shaped social science research, socializing young scholars into seeing the "important" questions and ignoring the "irrelevant" ones (Kuhn 1962). Indeed, Benson and Williams present compelling em-

pirical evidence that social scientists in the past 25 years have largely ignored the role of religion in human affairs (Benson and Williams 1986: 5). Moreover, despite the numerous books being published on religion and politics, the major political science journals — the exemplars of “normal science” — have yet to be penetrated significantly by this new field.¹

Clearly, religion has existed on the margins of elite thought, and where pesky religious belief does persist, it can be explained away as false consciousness or subsumed under other, more “explanatory” variables. Orthodox religion, in particular, has rarely been treated sympathetically or, we might say, on its own terms. As Fowler notes in an earlier work on evangelical thought (Fowler 1982), Protestant orthodoxy in the late 1960s and 1970s was largely ignored by literati in favor of the Berrigans, eastern religions, Buddhism, nature worship, and other hip manifestations of the new age, all while evangelicals frenetically expanded church memberships and debated among themselves about engagement in society. When conservative Protestantism is not simply ignored by intellectuals, it can be linked smugly to political intolerance, “status anxiety,” or right wing reaction.² The extent of the normative biases embedded in this literature are now becoming evident. Many scholars, for example, claim to find a strong link between conservative religious faith and political intolerance.³ Yet this “behavioral” research on attitudes never measures actual intolerant behavior. Moreover, there is a problem of selectivity. Objects of right-wing intolerance are invariably chosen in surveys, but seldom objects of left-wing intolerance. Thus conservative fundamentalists are viewed invariably as the most intolerant because they react most negatively to statements about homosexuals or communists. When the objects of intolerance change, however, so do the results: religious Jews, not surprisingly, can be found “intolerant” of Nazis and open-minded liberals “intolerant” of Christian fundamentalists.⁴ The usefulness of this line of research is increasingly coming into question, particularly as scholars move beyond conventional survey techniques to observation of actual behavior. In a repeat study of Muncie, Indiana (the site of the famous Middletown ethnographic study in the 1930s), researchers in the 1970s found evidence contrary to the intolerance literature. Church attendance was up from the 1930s and conservative churches were thriving, yet the growth of tolerance was palpable (Wald 1987: 11).

What characterizes the new body of scholarship reviewed here is the greater sympathy with which religion is treated, which is not to say these

¹ From 1984 through the summer of 1987 religion appeared prominently in only three articles (Reichley 1985; Beatty and Walter 1984; Elifson and Hadaway 1984) out of the entire literature published in six major journals — APSR, JOP, AJPS, PSQ, POQ, WPQ. Religious scholarship brings into sharp focus an emerging pattern in political science generally: the disjunction between journal literature and scholarly books; the existence, indeed, of at least two distinct kinds of “mainstream” research.

² Seymour Martin Lipset’s research on right-wing politics in America has been enormously influential here (Lipset and Raab 1978).

³ This literature is summarized by Wald (1987: Chapter 9), and Beatty and Walter (1984).

⁴ James David Hunter (in Liebman and Wuthnow 1983) catalogues well the hypocrisy of the liberal reaction to the Christian Right.

authors are uncritical, but that they have made a rather dramatic break from the past. The two textbooks, Fowler's and Wald's, are self-consciously sympathetic, viewing religious political activism as rooted in American history. The Benson and Williams study finds links between religion and diverse manifestations of political ideology, exploding the canard that faith is synonymous with "reactionary" politics. Reichley and Neuhaus, similarly, see a profound bond between religious values and the foundations of American democracy. Lopatto's treatment is less normatively concerned, yet his discussion of the centrality of religious values and their role in presidential voting indicates that this mixing of "religion and politics" is neither unusual nor dangerous. Finally, while the articles in the Liebman and Wuthnow reader are not necessarily complimentary of the New Religious Right, neither are they, by and large, judgmental. These collective works produce a picture of a pluralist dynamism in American religion, a dynamism that ramifies in complex and revealing ways. All these authors would agree, no doubt, with Wald's assertion that "one cannot claim to understand the contemporary era without appreciating the religious factor" (Wald 1987: 17). In light of past neglect, consequently, we have much important work to do.

RELIGIOUS VALUES AND POLITICS

The hardest thing to grasp, yet perhaps the most important, is the link between religious values and political behavior. While much needs to be done in this area, some of the pioneering work is reflected here. Benson and Williams demonstrate convincingly that, contrary to the received wisdom in congressional scholarship, members of Congress are not empty religious vessels, but indeed bring deeply held religious conceptions of the world to their work. Similarly, Lopatto argues that because religious socialization is deeper than, or prior to, political socialization, religious values may shape Americans' voting behavior in complex and often counter-intuitive ways. Fowler, in one of his most penetrating chapters (1985: 26-45) argues that by providing a refuge from the relentless individualism and rationalism of American liberalism, churches help to sustain the American experiment of expansive individual freedom, echoing, of course, Tocqueville's claim that religion is the "first of the American political institutions" (Tocqueville 1969: 292). Of all the works, the two most ambitious on this issue are Reichley's and Neuhaus's. Reichley, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, centers his lengthy volume on values that intersect religious and political life. His attempt to chart a typology of value systems across the full sweep of American history, though slow going at times, is both heroic and illuminating. Clearly, in his view, the activities of churches have been, and will continue to be, closely intertwined with American public life because of common foundational values that are both religious and political. A "theistic humanism," Reichley argues, blends the values of individualism, social authority, and transcendent purpose into a dominant, though not exclusive, American value system.

Neuhaus moves beyond the empirical to make a startling normative argument. He is convinced that, in spite of the continued religious faith of most Americans, something indeed has changed fundamentally in the past three decades or so. The public square, he argues, has been sanitized of religiously grounded public debate, weakening the transcendent moral underpinning that both he and Reichley believe may be necessary to the maintenance of a democracy. Thus, contrary to the belief that religion is a threat to public civility and life, the de-legitimation of religiously based moral arguments — the “naked public square” — creates a dangerous moral vacuum. Is there any wonder that our public schools have become battlegrounds? A society that cannot agree what values to teach its young — and thinks it can teach value-free education — is courting disaster. Richard Baer (1982), in a devastating critique of “values clarification,” recounts the story of a teacher who cannot condemn cheating, but only can state that she values honesty. But, a student asks, “Aren’t you telling us what to value?” No, the teacher responds, “You who choose dishonesty as a value may not practice it here. That’s all I’m saying.” Unable to refer to clear moral standards, the teacher ultimately falls back upon authoritarian power — you will fail if you cheat. This is Neuhaus’s point. If we cannot have a moral debate, if *your* values are just as good as *mine*, then it all comes down to naked power. Neuhaus does not deny that there are secular bases for moral action; rather, he is concerned that in shielding the public square from religiously grounded values we have cut ourselves off from a compelling and historic source of moral guidance and challenge.

Neuhaus’s work, in particular, addresses the debate over the public role of religious values that emerged powerfully in the 1984 presidential campaign. Recall Geraldine Ferraro’s statement that while she agreed with the teaching of her church on abortion, she could not “impose” those values on the rest of society. This statement is profoundly compatible with a prevailing notion among secular elites that religion is inherently a “private, personal” thing, certainly not politically relevant. Yet the inner contradiction is explicit, and reveals a dilemma for any Catholic Democrat running for president. Ferraro did not say only that she was personally opposed to abortion, but that she *accepted* the teaching of her church on the subject. Yet if one really accepted that teaching, which is that abortion is the taking of human life, would it not seem reasonable to undertake political efforts to protect the civil rights of the unborn? Ferraro’s position was all the more untenable because she actively supported public funding for abortions. Mario Cuomo, on the other hand, articulated a more sophisticated position, arguing that in the interest of “civil peace” Catholic politicians might have to tolerate practices that they deem sinful. Yet the dilemma remains. If faith bears no relationship to public action, then it appears shallow; if, on the other hand, faith compels, say, the veto of capital punishment, then why does it not also proscribe abortions?

Expanding upon earlier studies (Ladd and Hadley 1975; Menendez 1977), Lopatto (1985) attempts to link religious values with presidential

voting. He succeeds well in accomplishing his central goal, demonstrating that religion is indeed an independent explanatory variable in presidential voting. What is fascinating is the continuity he finds in the bond between religion and party systems of the past and present. Particularly intriguing is his description of the early alliance of strange bedfellows in the Democratic-Republican party — Jeffersonian deists and evangelical pietists, Baptists, and Methodists — who faced a common threat in the Federalist establishmentarians. Lopatto shows how this intermittent coalition between the “secularists” and the “out” religions continued through the New Deal, which received some of its strongest backing from lower-class, theologically conservative Protestants. His analysis of the period from 1960 to 1980 demonstrates, among other things, how changes in the party agendas have cut across those old boundaries. It is a story worth telling. As the Democratic party moved away from class issues to the new age social agenda, it lost support from theologically conservative Protestants, especially among the young.

One problem with Lopatto's approach is that, at times, he attempts to show too smooth a link between theological and political ideology. Theologically conservative Protestants can, under the right circumstances, vote for a “progressive” economic platform even while they align themselves with the Religious Right on such social issues as abortion and school prayer. Likewise, members of theologically liberal churches, particularly the mink coat set in some Episcopalian and Presbyterian congregations, where pro-choice sentiment is high, have every economic reason to vote Republican.

Another serious problem with Lopatto's analysis involves faulty instrumentation. In charting the impact of religion as an independent variable, Lopatto compares a hypothetical normal vote with the actual vote in successive presidential elections to see what variance accrued to religion. The problem is that he uses party identification as his indicator of normal vote, which seriously underestimates the extent of realignment that has occurred, especially among conservative Protestants in presidential elections. As we know, many Southern Baptist Democrats now routinely vote for Republican presidential candidates. Without taking this into account, Lopatto concludes, inaccurately I think, that religion played no major role in Jimmy Carter's election (or to put it in more precise terms, that religious variables could explain no variance in the normal vote). If he had used a measure that took into account voting habits instead of party identification, Lopatto would have found that the real story from 1964 to 1984 was the consistent erosion of conservative white Protestant support away from the Democratic party, with only Jimmy Carter, a born-again Southerner, able to bring enough of them (exactly 50 percent according to Lopatto) back into the fold to win. The message is clear: short of a major economic crisis, in which class issues rise to the fore, the Democratic party may be unable to gain support from traditionally Democratic, but culturally conservative, Protestants (and increasingly Catholics as well), if it can not move beyond its growing secular and libertarian image.

A great paradox in the modern age is the rise of fundamentalist religion and its political assertiveness. But should this really be so surprising? Modernity is itself an inherently ambivalent experience. On the one hand it promises newness, adventure, power, and freedom; on the other it threatens to sever us from our roots and traditions, destroying who we are (Prehoditch and Schwarz 1987). Fundamentalists would feel this tension most poignantly. The question is: are they just a fringe phenomenon of American life, or are they intimately linked, perhaps by their anxieties, to the American mainstream? Here the scholars divide. Buell and Sigelman (1985), for example, argue that popular support for the Moral Majority is lacking, citing low feeling thermometer scores for the Reverend Jerry Falwell. Simpson (Liebman and Wuthnow 1983), in contrast, employs a sophisticated technique in analyzing national attitudes⁵ that indicates latent majority support for major elements of the New Religious Right agenda, a theme echoed in other research (Moen 1986; Hertzke 1988). Strategically, at least, this "latent" support appears more important than isolated feeling thermometer scores. For example, several million citizens have been mobilized to write Congress in support of school prayer (favored by the majority of Americans and an overwhelming share of blacks and Hispanics), often unaware of who is doing the orchestrating in Washington (Hertzke 1988: Chapter 6).

PENETRATING THE MAINSTREAM:
THE CURIOUS CASE OF *RELIGION ON CAPITOL HILL*

The fate of the Benson and Williams work is a telling commentary on the secular "sociology" of our discipline and, in this case, the insulated state of mainstream congressional scholarship. The book represents a project of the Search Institute in Minneapolis, a research foundation devoted to the study of religion and its connection to society. Neither author is a political scientist, much less a congressional scholar, which accounts perhaps for their audaciously creative approach. If they had asked the experienced veterans of congressional research, no doubt they would have learned that it is next to impossible to conduct lengthy interviews with a large *random* sample of members of Congress. Not daunted by this knowledge, the authors were able to interview 80 members of Congress, or 72 percent of their 112 member random sample. The interviews were tape recorded, and a content analysis was conducted with dual checks for coding of responses. The nature of the interviews is the most fascinating part of the study. Members were asked views about the nature of God, moral responsibility, and paths to salvation. Peter Benson observed that many of these interviews lasted much longer than expected because members became reflective and expansive.⁶ What does

⁵ Simpson tested his hypothesis by maximum likelihood laden structure analysis (MLLSA) (in Liebman and Wuthnow 1983: 191).

⁶ At the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Peter Benson elaborated on his study before a panel of reviewers, all of whom were uniformly enthusiastic about the work.

one say, after all, when asked, "What is the human problem your religion deals with?" or "What is salvation?"

One would think that such a methodologically sophisticated study, combining in-depth interviews with statistical voting correlations, drawing pathfinding conclusions and raising all sorts of intriguing questions, would be welcomed with excitement by the political science community. Not so. Originally published in 1982 and insufficiently promoted by the original publisher, it was out of print by 1985, receiving little play in political science. It has, thankfully, been picked up by Oxford University Press and reissued. But this is only symptomatic of the lack of penetration of the religious dimension into the insulated world of congressional scholarship. Congressional text books, published as late as 1986, continue to ignore this work, and one asserts flatly that "on most issues, religion probably has little impact on how members approach voting or other choices" (Davidson and Oleszek 1985: 112). Why the neglect of this study? One reason is that it does not fit religion into pre-existing categories of political analysis; rather, it begins with sophisticated categories of religious experience (not the ordinary stuff of congressional research), and then applies them to congressional members. The study nicely explodes myths about Congress — that members' religious beliefs bear little relationship to how they vote, that evangelical Christians are a united conservative force, and that members who affirm Christian fundamentals are politically conservative. These findings have not been integrated into congressional scholarship because to accept them would undermine basic conceptions about American politics. This research, as Thomas Kuhn would say, is outside of the paradigm (Kuhn 1962).

Religion on Capitol Hill is a complex work, but its importance in the literature on religion and politics necessitates an elaboration here. The authors begin by constructing thirteen scales of religious belief — including images of God, the relative importance of religion, orthodoxy, and what they call dominant religious themes. The religious themes, organized as pairs, reach beyond denominational categories to experiential ones. How does one experience God or religion? As comforting or challenging? As restricting or releasing? As an individual or a member of community? What is the central demand of one's religion — reverence to God or service to fellow humans? A cluster analysis of member responses revealed that the thirteen scales bunched themselves predictably into six religious types. These six types, which emerge out of the coding of interview responses, remain the central finding and real contribution of the work. Unlike denominational differences, which show little correlation to political ideology and voting, these six types appear to tap underlying value systems that color members behavior. The credibility of the study is enhanced by the fact that interviewers were able to identify the 22 percent of the sample who were only nominally religious. As Peter Benson observed, these were the ones who were stymied by such questions as, "What is the path to salvation?" Intriguingly, this most secular group was not the most liberal; far from it. The most liberal group (as defined by Americans for Democratic Action ratings) was com-

prised of what Benson and Williams term “people-concerned religionists,” followed closely by the “non-traditional religionists.” At the other end were the very conservative “legalistic religionists,” and “self-concerned religionists.”

The sharp polarization here enabled the authors to conclude that the major dividing line between conservatives and liberals was an “individual preserving religion” versus a “community-building religion.” And there is a nice intuitive feel about this. The problem, however, is that the authors do not probe deeply enough their own middle categories, nor do they link them convincingly to voting behavior. Curiously, the two “moderate” groups of legislators include both the *least* religious members (“nominal religionists”), and arguably the *most* religious members (“integrated religionists”). This is a case of measures too crude to tap the relevant differences. The integrated religionists, contrary to expectations, strongly combined religious themes in their interviews. Senator Mark Hatfield, evangelical Republican from Oregon, is the exemplar of this category. Hatfield’s responses, as Benson described the interview, simultaneously stressed reverence for God with service to society, religion as comforting *and* challenging, restricting *and* releasing. To those familiar with Hatfield’s books on faith and politics (Hatfield 1968, 1971, 1976), this is neither paradoxical nor surprising. And while Hatfield’s liberalism score puts him ideologically on par with secular legislators, this is because differences are masked. Hatfield is simultaneously “conservative” on abortion and “liberal” on military issues and funding for the poor; thus his aggregate score is moderate. A secular legislator, in contrast, could simultaneously vote “liberal” on abortion and “conservative” on military issues or welfare funding — and receive an identical score. Thus, while Benson and Williams present convincing evidence of strong correlations between voting and religious types, their measures may actually underestimate the link for some legislators.

In part this oversight is rooted in normative biases of the categories and measures chosen. Clearly the authors think well of “community-building” religion versus the more selfish sounding “individual preserving” religion. But when they equate community-building politics with, among other things, federal funding for abortion, they miss a dimension revealed by their own “integrated religionist” category. This brings to mind an incident that occurred at a recent scholarly meeting. A feminist theorist on a political science panel was asked if she could imagine *any* circumstance in which opposition to abortion might be rooted in something other than misogyny, perhaps instead in a community-minded desire to protect the vulnerable. The answer was no. Yet for Hatfield and others that is very much the case. Echoing Cardinal Bernardin’s “seamless garment of life,” some evangelicals and Roman Catholics have embraced simultaneously a pro-life position with anti-nuclear policies and concern for the poor, patterns of behavior that may be embedded in the Benson and Williams study, but are not explored.

But this is a minor problem compared to the contribution made. It is clear that the categories of religious experience developed for this study

of Congress will have wide application, and studies are emerging now from a variety of contexts. One of the most fascinating concerns an analysis of the religious dimensions of the politics in Northern Ireland (Mac Iver 1987). Martha Abele Mac Iver interviewed a number of political elites, including Roman Catholics and Protestant moderates and extremists, and found that the dimensions outlined by Benson and Williams were highly predictive of political orientation. The point is that we may be discovering a genuinely powerful new tool for exploring political conflicts.

A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

Where, as scholars, do we go from here? A key weakness in the emerging literature is a confusion about the role of religion in the politics of American blacks. The problem is that at one level the political behavior of American blacks is highly predictable, registering almost monolithic support for Democratic presidential candidates. Thus Lopatto excludes blacks from his analysis because there is little "variance" to explain from one election to another. The problem with this, as with much similar behavioral research, is that predicting variation becomes the quest, not explaining behavior. If the Benson and Williams study is correct about the underlying religious dimension to political attitudes, then the link between religion and black voting would not appear in statistical techniques designed to explain variance. Another problem is oversimplifying the nature of black political attitudes. Wald, for example, falls victim to the reductionist equation — American blacks = liberalism (1987: 248). This is curious because in his own analysis of political attitudes Wald found blacks more "conservative" than any other group on abortion, and highly conservative on other noneconomic issues — pornography, homosexuality, and drug use. Other surveys reveal that blacks, far more than whites, support school prayer.⁷ Wald ignores this evidence in asserting that politically blacks are liberals. They may vote monolithically for Democratic presidential candidates, but they may also be mobilizable in favor of items on the New Religious Right agenda, something fundamentalist leaders are keenly aware of. Of all the books, Fowler's contains the most penetrating analysis of religion and black politics, especially its appreciation of black history and pluralism (Fowler 1985: 293-316), but much more needs to be done.

While many scholars continue to ignore black religious experience, the evidence of a strong religious dimension in black political attitudes is now emerging. Recent research by Frank Gilliam Jr. (Gilliam 1986, 1987; Gilliam and Whitby 1987) reveals that, controlling for class and age, "degree of religiosity" among American blacks plays a powerful independent role in predicting attitudes on a number of social issues.⁸ Iron-

⁷ The 1984 American National Election Study revealed that 83 percent of the blacks supported school prayer, in contrast to 66 percent for the total sample.

⁸ This is not surprising in light of data gathered by the Gallup organization on religious beliefs around the world. Respondents, broken into national subgroups, were asked

ically, these fascinating discoveries are only ancillary to the central thrust of Gilliam's research thus far, indicating perhaps that prevailing secular paradigms continue to focus scholarly attention elsewhere.

This raises a key dilemma in the study of religion and politics. To what extent can a discipline claiming to be scientific deal with a realm of human existence that affirms faith in the God beyond science? It is not a trivial question. Social science begins with naturalistic assumptions about human life and organization. In this sense Nietzsche was prescient; God and faith are not legitimate referents in our modern systems of explanation. How, then, can we study the faith of others? In this area, especially, a phenomenological dimension is called for.⁹ We must not assume we already know about "those fundamentalists," or "those bishops." We must attempt to see the world as they see it. Clearly, the strengths of the works reviewed here are due in part to this consciousness. The Benson and Williams study is compelling because the authors combined, in a sense, a phenomenological openness to members' pluralistic experiences of religion, with a behavioral analysis correlating those values with actual voting. Similarly, both the Fowler and Wald texts are replete with richly revealing examples of their personal experiences with those of diverse faiths. Reichley, too, demonstrates a commanding grasp of the world view of diverse religious political actors. On the other hand, weaknesses in the literature often seem to flow from a lack of experiential contact with the subjects studied. Some scholars continue to use the terms "evangelical" and "fundamentalist" interchangeably, a practice which confuses two connected, but distinct traditions.¹⁰ Leaders of the National Association of Evangelicals in Washington, for example, speak openly of disagreements with their "fundamentalist brethren" (Hertzke 1988). Broadly construed phenomenological approaches (open-ended interviews, participant observation, attending church, and otherwise hanging around religious people), should help inform scholars of the ways in which religious America does not fit their preconceived notions.

One illustration of the need for this kind of analysis is the fascinating conflict between conservative religious women and feminists. No doubt some members of the academy think they know all they need to know about those benighted "housewives" who follow "reactionaries" like Phyllis Schlafly. Yet there is much to learn here. One of the largest of the New Religious Right organizations in Washington is Concerned Women for America, a group that claims over half a million members, which if even close to true would make it larger than the combined membership of the National Organization of Women, the National Womens Political Caucus, and the League of Women Voters. The most effective

how important religion is to them, on a scale of 1 to 10. One subgroup surpassed those in every other nation: American blacks, whose responses averaged 9.04 (Gallup 1985: 50).

⁹ See especially Bernstein's account of the phenomenological perspective (Bernstein 1978).

¹⁰ A notable example is Wuthnow's essay (in Liebman and Wuthnow 1983), which seemed to equate evangelicals generally with the Religious Right.

recruiting tool for CWA is a small brochure with *nothing but* quotations by feminists attacking religion and the family.¹¹ What is striking about conservative religious women is that they are angry, just as feminists are angry. The targets of the anger may change from group to group (though at times both seem angry at men, if for different reasons), but the experience of this anger cries out for explanation. It is a supreme irony that feminist theory, a branch of our discipline that emphasizes the experience of women and demands that this experience be incorporated into mainstream research, should show such little concern for the experiences of so many women. More phenomenological insights, like those revealed in Luker's analysis of opposing women's groups in the California abortion debate (Luker 1984), are needed here.

These suggestions notwithstanding, a genuine knowledge explosion *is* occurring in the field of religion and politics. Recent works range far afield, from Guth's survey of Southern Baptist ministers (1986) to his religious profile of political party contributors (Guth and Green 1987), from Wildavsky's (1984) examination of the leadership style of Moses to Dunn's (1984) synthesis of theology and American political thought, from Paul Vitz' (1986) often-cited probe into the secular bias of public school textbooks to a penetrating empirical analysis of the unique advantage of Catholic parochial education for minority students (Coleman and Hoffer 1987). What we are witnessing is an intellectual ferment that, we can hope, will ultimately crystalize into coherent and broadly theoretical explanations. The books reviewed here begin that process, but by no means complete it. The enigma of religion in America has yet to be unraveled.

AMERICAN RELIGION: AN ENDURING LEGACY

American religion, as Tocqueville observed a century and a half ago, thrives with a pluralist vitality not found in Europe. And yet in all its pluralism there remains a common historical legacy that modernity has yet to shake. Take the curious case of that favorite hymn, "Amazing Grace." There is hardly an American congregation not comfortable singing this tellingly orthodox portrayal of sin, grace, and redemption: "Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me. . . ." One can hear renditions on the Trinity Broadcast Network, or at a Roman Catholic Mass, or wafting out of a street corner black Baptist congregation. But as any devotee of folk music knows, it is also a favorite with the likes of Joan Baez and Arlo Guthrie. It seems to resonate with the distant, "mystic cords of memory" which bind us together as a people. The author of the song, John Newton, was the captain of an 18th Century slave ship. Rescued from his "wretched" life by the grace of a powerful religious experience, Newton went on to become one of the most eloquent voices of his day against the evil of slavery (Pollock 1981). He was "saved by

¹¹ "To Manipulate a Woman," Concerned Women for America, P.O. Box 5100, San Diego, CA 92105.

grace," and thus could live his life in the freedom of that recognition: "Shall I be wafted to the skies, On flowery beds of ease, While others strive to win the prize, And sail on bloody seas."¹² Religion to some may be backward, benighted; but to many it is vision, and power, and meaning. How arid will be our discipline if we do not integrate, even occasionally, this dimension of American experience into our systems of explanation. Should secular elites, including those in the academy, ever succeed in completely marginalizing or trivializing this powerful religious heritage, we should expect a thundering response of little people who experience the amazing grace of God.

REFERENCES

- Beatty, Kathleen Murphy, and Oliver Walter. 1984. "Religious Preference and Practice: Reevaluating Their Impact on Political Tolerance." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 48: 318-29.
- Baer, Richard A. 1982. "Teaching Values in the Schools: Clarification or Indocination?" *Principal*, January.
- Buell, Emmett H., and Lee Sigelman. 1985. "An Army That Meets every Sunday? Popular Support for the Moral Majority in 1980." *Social Science Quarterly* 66: 426-34.
- Coleman, James S., and Thomas Hoffer. 1987. *Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Davidson, Roger H., and Walter J. Oleszek. 1985. *Congress and its Members*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly.
- Dunn, Charles. 1984. *American Political Theology*. New York: Praeger.
- Elifson, Kirk W., and C. Kirk Hadaway. 1985. "Prayer in Public Schools: When Church and State Collide." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49, No. 3: 317-29.
- Fowler, Robert Booth. 1982. *A New Engagement: Evangelical Political Thought 1966-1976*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Gallup, George Jr. 1985. "Religion in America 50 Years: 1935-1985." *The Gallup Report*, No. 236.
- Gilliam, Franklin D., Jr. 1986. "Black America: Divided by Class?" *Public Opinion* (February/March): 53-57.
- . 1987. "A Connatural Theory of the Difference in Mass Attitudes Between Advantaged and Disadvantaged Groups." Unpublished paper, University of California-Los Angeles.
- , and Kenny Whitby. 1987. "Race, Class, and Mass Attitudes: An Ethclass Interpretation." Paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Meeting, Chicago.
- Guth, James. 1986. "Political Converts: Partisan Realignment Among Southern Baptist Ministers." *Election Politics* 3.
- , and John Green. 1987. "God and the GOP: Varieties of Religiosity Among Political Contributors." Paper presented at the 1987 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.

¹² As sung by Arlo Guthrie, on *Precious Friend*, by Arlo Guthrie and Pete Seeger, 1982.

- Hatfield, Mark. 1976. *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. Waco, TX: Word Books.
- . 1971. *Conflict and Conscience*. Waco, TX: Word Books.
- . 1968. *Not Quite So Simple*. New York: Harper.
- Hertzke, Allen D. 1988. *Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ladd, E. C., and Charles Hadley. 1975. *Transformations of the American Party System*. New York: Norton.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Earl Raab. 1978. *The Politics of Unreason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Luker, Kristen. 1984. *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mac Iver, Martha Abele. 1987. "A Clash of Symbols in Northern Ireland: Extremist and Moderate Protestant Elites." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Anaheim, CA, March.
- Menendez, Albert J. *Religion at the Polls*. 1977. Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Moen, Matthew. 1986. "The New Christian Right and the Legislative Agenda: The Politics of Agenda Setting in the 97th and 98th Congresses." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma.
- Reichley, James A. 1986. "Religion and the Future of American Politics." *Political Science Quarterly* 101 (1): 23-48.
- Pollock, John. 1981. *Amazing Grace: John Newton's Story*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Prehoditch, Thomas P., and Kurt A. Schwartz. 1987. "Liberation Theology, U.S.A." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Anaheim, CA, March.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. 1969. *Democracy in America*. Tr. George Lawrence. J. P. Mayer, ed. Garden City, NY: Anchor.
- Vitz, Paul C. 1986. *Censorship: Evidence of Bias in Our Children's Textbooks*. Ann Arbor: Servant.
- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1984. *The Nursing Father: Moses as a Political Leader*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.